



SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY: 'Systemic breakdowns' investigated at child-protection agency

By [JOE NELSON](#)

2016-06-22 19:28:18



California Attorney General Kamala Harris announced Wednesday her office is investigating allegations of systemic failures in San Bernardino County's Department of Children and Family Services, prompted by horrific tales of children repeatedly being placed into abusive homes where they died or were severely abused.

"We are looking more broadly than any one individual incident. We're looking at the need for systemic reform and potential systemic breakdowns," said Jill Habig, special counsel to the attorney general.

"The reason we're disclosing this now is we're at a point in the investigation where we need public engagement and input so we have a full, thorough and impartial investigation," Habig said. "We're putting this out so people can contact us and provide information."

To do so, go to oag.ca.gov/bcj/investigations and click on the "submit information" button, or email BCJTips@doj.ca.gov.

The investigation was launched last year amid allegations by former social workers that top San Bernardino County officials covered up incidents in which children in the juvenile dependency system either died or were severely abused by their parents or foster parents. At least two lawsuits have been filed by former San Bernardino County social workers alleging whistleblower retaliation.

"We look forward to continuing our work with the Bureau of Children's Justice in its examination of our practices and are always interested in any outcomes that could benefit our families," said Marlene Hagen, director of San Bernardino County's Department of Children and Family Services, in a statement Wednesday.

The allegations in San Bernardino County were among the reasons Harris established the Bureau of Children's Justice last March.

"The Bureau of Children's Justice's active investigations seek to protect children statewide from trafficking, abuse, neglect, and unlawful punishment. I want to encourage members of the public to report information about these investigations to my office," Harris said in a statement Wednesday.

S.B. COUNTY LAWSUITS

In September last year, former social workers Eric Bahra and Mary Anna Whitehall filed separate lawsuits in San Bernardino Superior Court alleging whistleblower retaliation.

Bahra, who only worked for the county for 11 months, alleged he was fired after reporting to his supervisor in June 2013 that the department's database did not cross-check reports of child abuse by foster parents. It resulted in a total of 39 children, over the span of 12 years, being placed into a foster home where the father was accused in 2013 of sexually abusing some of the children, taking nude photographs of them and placing the photos in albums.

Whitehall alleges in her lawsuit that she was placed on administrative leave six days after she and two other social workers filed motions in juvenile dependency court alleging the Department of Children and Family Services committed fraud upon the court in order to discredit Bahra, which ultimately led to his termination.

Specifically, top DCFS officials, Whitehall alleges, attempted to discredit Bahra by falsifying evidence in a July 2013 case in which Bahra and another social worker responded to a report of a dead infant at a San Bernardino residence.

Bahra reported that the home smelled of methamphetamine, and that four other children in the home showed signs of physical abuse. He recommended they be removed from the home and placed into foster homes. The social worker who accompanied Bahra that day, Melissa Pena, corroborated Bahra's assessment.

But DCFS officials, Whitehall alleges, falsified evidence and told the court Bahra lied in his reports and breached confidentiality. They recommended the four surviving children be returned to their biological parents.

By doing so, DCFS jeopardized the safety of the four children, Whitehall alleges.

Six days after filing her motion, Whitehall was placed on administrative leave. She suffered emotional distress and mental anguish, and subsequently resigned, according to her lawsuit.

The county has denied the allegations in both lawsuits.

C.L. Lopez, spokeswoman for the county Division of Human Services, declined to comment, citing the pending litigation.

Bahra's and Whitehall's attorney, Valerie Ross, could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Contact the writer: joe.nelson@langnews.com, @SBCountyNow on Twitter

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By [Shea Johnson](#)[Print Page](#)

June 22, 2016 5:43PM

State DOJ probing county's Children and Family Services

The state Department of Justice is investigating San Bernardino County's Children and Family Services, it was announced Wednesday.

The state DOJ's Bureau of Children's Justice launched a probe into the county's "compliance with California laws intended to ensure the safety and well-being of children, including children in the dependency system," according to the BCJ's website.

It was one of five investigations announced statewide and the only one affecting San Bernardino County.

"We look forward to continuing our work with the Bureau of Children's Justice in its examination of our practices," Marlene Hagen, the director of Children and Family Services, said in a statement, "and are always interested in any outcomes that could benefit our families."

Last summer, former county social workers, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told Fox 11 News that CFS was covering up or ignoring evidence of abuse leading to foster children's deaths.

In response, the department said it "had already conducted their own investigations into these cases" detailed in Fox 11's stories "long before" they aired and had implemented several measures to enhance children safety, including allowing social workers the ability to obtain court orders to remove children 24/7 from potentially abusive homes or remove children on the spot in extreme cases with the assistance of authorities.

Attorney Jack H. Anthony, who sued the county and others in October in a case involving two allegedly abusive foster parents in Victorville, told the Daily Press on Wednesday that he deposed a former county social worker who had been assigned to investigate allegations involving his client.

"(The social worker) said there had been seven substantiated referrals of neglect and abuse against these foster parents," Anthony said, "but because they were improperly (logged) in the system," children were placed in the home.

Anthony said he filed an amended complaint earlier this year that accused the county of expunging records pertaining to the investigation of his client before they were produced.

"I'll say that what my case has disclosed so far, there appeared to be not just omission, but direct intentional acts to cover up things that had taken place," he said. "So, yes, I think there is very good cause for an investigation into the events that were going on there."

The county has denied the claims and a trial setting conference is scheduled Aug. 1, court records show.

Attorney Valerie Ross, who Fox 11 said was representing social workers suing county CFS amid allegations of hiding gross negligence, could not be reached Wednesday.

"What I would seriously hope is that this would not be a wasted effort," said Attorney L. Wallace Pate, an expert in foster care liability within private and government agencies. "It's important that this investigation include members of the community in order to be a real service to the children and the taxpayers."

The Bureau of Children's Justice, created by Attorney Gen. Kamala Harris last year, is seeking input from the public on the investigation. Individuals are encouraged to provide information — whether positive or negative — by visiting Oag.Ca.Gov/bcj/investigations and clicking the "submit information" button or by sending an email to BCJTips@doj.ca.gov.

Pate, who filed her own lawsuit in 2014 against Rancho Cucamonga-based Interim Care Foster Family Agency on behalf of eight former foster children she dubbed "the San Bernardino County 8," added that the probe was "a major move in the right direction" yet reiterated it needed to include consultation with more than "just the usual taking heads and officials."

"That is the reason these problems have gone unanswered," she said. "Because the voices of the mothers and the fathers and the children have never been heard."

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The Bureau of Children's Justice, created by Attorney Gen. Kamala Harris last year, launched a probe into San Bernardino County's Children and Family Services' "compliance with California laws intended to ensure the safety and well-being of children, including children in the dependency system." Nick Ut, Associated Press

The Children Are Dying: CA Attorney General opens negligence probe

State Attorney General Kamala Harris announces a big investigation into the San Bernardino Children and Family Services...a department that has been under investigation for more than a year by a local San Bernardino Grand Jury— with absolutely no r

Posted: Jun 22 2016 09:48AM PDT

Updated: Jun 22 2016 01:00PM PDT

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (FOX 11) - State Attorney General Kamala Harris announces a big investigation into the San Bernardino Children and Family Services...a department that has been under investigation for more than a year by a local San Bernardino Grand Jury— with absolutely no results.

FOX 11 News exposed one case after another of children who our sources say would be alive today if San Bernardino Children and Family Services had done its job.

We told you about a grand jury investigation into these deaths and the whistleblowers who risked their livelihood by coming forward.

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Now, almost a year after we first aired our first FOX 11 Investigation, State attorney General Kamala Harris publicly acknowledges that her department is now investigating San Bernardino County CFS and she's asking for the public to share information that might be helpful.

Our whistleblowers say this new investigation is a step in the right direction.

Attorney Valerie Ross represents social workers suing San Bernardino County CFS for allegedly covering up gross negligence that led to children dying.

The San Bernardino County Children & Family Services department has responded to the announcement by California Attorney General Kamala Harris that her agency is investigating the department.

"We look forward to continuing our work with the Bureau of Children's Justice in its examination of our practices

and are always interested in any outcomes that could benefit our families," said Marlene Hagen, Director, San Bernardino County Children & Family Services.

WARNING: the images that you will see are disturbing. Viewing is not recommended for young children.

Our sources say they'll anxiously await the results of the State Attorney General's investigation. Again, the Attorney General is asking for the public's help. If you have information that could help this investigation, click the link below.

Kamala Harris started The Bureau of Children's Justice in February of 2015. That department is now looking into whether San Bernardino County broke laws intended to ensure the safety and well-being of children, including children in foster care. Harris announced five different investigations throughout the state.

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Health center in San Bernardino seen as 'symbol of recovery'

By Jim Steinberg, The Sun

Wednesday, June 22, 2016



SAN BERNARDINO >> The \$65 million health care and health education initiative in downtown San Bernardino is a “symbol of our recovery and a bold start to our new future.”

Those were the words former Mayor Pat Morris used to describe the 150,000 square-foot building for Loma Linda University Health San Bernardino during a ribbon cutting ceremony Wednesday attended by more than 500.

The facility will begin offering services for family medicine, pediatrics and behavioral health next month, with internal medicine

and OB/GYN services beginning in August.

The San Manuel Gateway College, also located in the building, will begin with medical assistant and certified nurse assistant programs in September.

Morris delivered his comments via a video shown inside a tent set-up outside the three-story building, at 250 South G Street, adjacent to the San Manuel Stadium.

Initial talks about a facility to expand the SAC Health System, a Loma Linda University Health affiliated unit, which targets medically underserved, began as the Affordable Care Act became a reality in 2009, Dr. Richard Hart, president of Loma Linda Health, said Wednesday prior to the ribbon cutting.

The SAC Health System clinic at the former Norton Air Force Base sees about 50,000 patients per year, while the new clinic will have the capacity to see 200,000 annually, Hart said.

The older facility, at 1455 E. Third Street, will remain open, officials said.

The idea received huge boosts from both Morris, who was mayor at the time, and the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, which donated \$10 million to support a joint medical-education effort, Hart said.

The facility will increase the number of primary care and specialty physicians in the Inland Empire, because most stay near the area where they receive their residency training, said Dr. Daniel Jiang, director of graduate education, LLU Medical School.

The facility will be used as part of the resident training for some 300 newly graduated medical doctors annually, he said.

Arwyn Wild, medical director for San Manuel Gateway College, said at full capacity, the college will train up to 300 students per year, but courses only will be offered if there are jobs in the Inland Empire for those students when they graduate.

Among the clinics and related clinical services to be offered are orthopedics, dental, after hours care,

ophthalmology, women's health, pharmacy, radiology and phlebotomy lab.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/health/20160622/health-center-in-san-bernardino-seen-as-symbol-of-recovery>

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By [Matthew Cabe](#)[Print Page](#)

June 22, 2016 4:32PM

Apple Valley residents' 'Right to Vote on Debt Act' qualifies for November ballot

APPLE VALLEY — The initiative started in an attempt to allow residents to vote on public debt has qualified for the November ballot.

Proponents of the "Right to Vote on Debt Act," which was started by Apple Valley residents Chuck and Pat Hanson in response to the town's eminent domain action against Liberty Utilities, Apple Valley, gathered 5,348 signatures that were submitted to the town clerk May 10.

Town spokeswoman Kathie Martin told the Daily Press on Wednesday that 3,873 of those signatures were found to be valid, surpassing the required amount by 701 signatures.

"Accordingly, the town clerk has informed the proponents that their measure has sufficient signatures to qualify," Martin said.

On June 28, the Town Council will receive the town clerk's Certificate of Sufficiency of Initiative Petition and consider its options, according to Martin, who previously said the Council can either adopt the ordinance outright, submit it to voters in November or order an Elections Code 9212 report to assess the impact of the initiative measure.

"In line with the Elections Code," Martin said, "town staff will recommend that the Town Council request the preparation of an impartial and informational report on the measure and its impact on the Town (before pursuing one of the other two options)."

Martin said should the Council choose to order the report, one of the first two options would still need to be decided upon after the report is completed. She added that the report will not interfere with the timeline for the November elections.

If passed by voters in November, the initiative would amend the Apple Valley municipal code to add a requirement that voters approve by a majority vote "any public debt over \$10 million" that provides funds for the acquisition of an enterprise.

That public debt is in reference to bonds the town would likely use to fund its acquisition by eminent domain of the water system owned by Liberty Utilities.

Liberty financially backed the initiative, and General Manager Tony Penna applauded the initiative Wednesday.

"We have tremendous respect for our customers and want them to have a real and meaningful voice with respect to all aspects of water service, from conservation, to water quality, to investments in infrastructure and water rates," Penna said. "We strongly support residents having the right to vote on long-term debt, and believe this important accountability measure should be passed."

The initiative also has been endorsed by the Citizens for Government Accountability, a group that opposes the town's acquisition attempt. A letter asking the Town Council to support the initiative was signed by Diana Carloni, Greg Raven and Leane Lee, three member's of CGA's leadership committee.

Carloni presented the letter to the Town Council at the June 14 Council meeting, and Mayor Barb Stanton said the initiative will be discussed during the June 28 meeting.

Amid the required-signature verification, a trial-setting court date in the town's eminent domain case against Liberty is scheduled for July 7, according to court records.

Town Attorney John Brown said Wednesday that the eminent domain action will move to trial as expected despite the qualification of the Hanson's initiative, which could work to halt an acquisition attempt should voters pass the initiative come November.

"The initiative and the lawsuit are procedurally unrelated," Brown said via email. "Liberty already tried unsuccessfully to get the court to stay the eminent domain proceeding pending resolution of their (California Environmental Quality Act) lawsuit. The eminent domain action should not be delayed in any way because of the initiative, and we expect the trial court to set a date for trial shortly."

Meanwhile, Brown added, a similar eminent domain proceeding involving Liberty and the city of Missoula, Montana, is winding down; the result of the eminent domain action in Missoula could serve as foreshadowing to what occurs in Apple Valley.

"The Supreme Court heard Liberty Utilities' appeal and a final decision from the Montana Supreme Court is expected shortly," Brown said. "The trial court has already entered a judgement in eminent domain. It is unclear how the loss of approximately one-third of its customers will impact Liberty's operations in Apple Valley, but many of its overhead costs remain fixed and it is unclear how the loss of that customer revenue could impact future water rates in the town."

President of Liberty Utilities California Greg Sorensen was unavailable to comment Wednesday on Brown's statements; however, company officials committed to responding Thursday.

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Cal State San Bernardino given largest gift in its history

By Mark Muckenfuss, The Press-Enterprise

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

Jack Brown's support of Cal State San Bernardino is nothing new. The executive chairman of Stater Bros. has a long-running relationship with the campus, even though he was never a student there; he went to San Jose State.

In 1993, Brown contributed \$1 million to the construction of Cal State San Bernardino's \$24 million business school. That building bears his name: Jack Brown Hall.

On Wednesday, Brown blew the doors off his previous giving, providing the campus with its biggest single philanthropic contribution in its 50-year history. The amount of Brown's gift has not been disclosed, but campus spokesman Joe Gutierrez said the school's largest gifts to date were two \$5 million donations, one each from the cities of Palm Desert and Indian Wells, to support the school's desert satellite campus.

Campus officials declined to provide information on how much Brown had contributed over the years.

Larry Rose is dean of business and public administration for the university. He said Brown's gift was not a complete surprise.

"Jack has had a really long relationship with us," said Rose, who has been at the campus since 2011. "Over the years we've had lots of interactions with Jack. Our Spirit of the Entrepreneur honored him one year. He has an honorary Ph.D."

Brown has also participated in scholarship programs, Rose said.

He said Brown's gift will be used as an endowment and will fund "academic enrichment and student scholarship." The money – which he said probably won't be tapped for a year or two – will be spent on attracting and retaining faculty, funding new programming and research, and on scholarships.

"I really think it's a recognition of what the college has meant to the community, that he would be proud to have his name associated with us," Rose said. "It's a validation of all the effort we've put in over the years."

Gutierrez said the amount of Brown's gift would be announced when the California State University Board of Trustees meets in Long Beach on July 19.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20160622/cal-state-san-bernardino-given-largest-gift-in-its-history>

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Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

Chino to spend money on streets in the coming year

By Imani Tate, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

CHINO >> With a healthy financial outlook, Chino will make improvements to its streets in the coming year.

The Chino City Council approved a \$70.8 million budget Tuesday night. The city expects \$71.9 million in revenues for 2016-17 fiscal year, which is \$1.1 million more than the \$70.8 million in planned expenditures, said City Manager Matt Ballantyne. The city is also able to maintain a “rainy day” reserve fund of \$37.1 million, 52 percent of the budget.

Councilman Tom Haughey joined his colleagues in congratulating the City Hall administrative leadership team and municipal employees at every level.

“It’s a pleasure to vote on a budget like this,” he said.

The city has had to only use reserves to balance the budget once since the 2007-08 national recession that drastically reduced revenues to local cities and agencies, Finance Director Rob Burns said.

“Due to the housing market crash and the subsequent recession (during the 2007-08 fiscal year), the city was required to utilize \$3.1 million in 2009-10 to balance revenues and expenditures,” Burns said. “General fund revenues were \$46.8 million and expenditures were \$49.9 million.”

Ballantyne and Burns made it clear that the \$5.7 million being taken from reserves is not to balance the budget. The withdrawal will be applied to extensive street rehabilitation capital projects that will be started and completed in the 2016-17 fiscal year, they said. The condition of city streets is a major concern of council members.

Councilwoman Eunice Ulloa credited civic-minded employees for creating and maintaining quality infrastructure in the city, especially streets.

“You can tell when you leave Chino because you oftentimes run into potholes and rough surfaces on streets in other communities,” Ulloa said.

Mayor Dennis Yates recalled tough times 24 years ago, when the city wasn’t in good shape at all. He and Councilman Glenn Duncan were elected in 1992 and thrust immediately into critical decisions with other council members, all fretting about the dismal conditions of city finances, Yates said.

“After the big recession of 1992-93, we had no reserves and the city’s general fund was \$500,000 upside down. We laid off 33 percent of our employees and had to cancel the Christmas parade and everything else because we had no money,” Yates added.

Duncan remembered the city was \$20 million behind in street improvements and had a \$80 million shortfall for sewers.

The severity of that 1992-93 fiscal year prompted council members to pledge “never again.” And the council has kept that promise, Yates said.

Ulloa credited the “astute vision” of civic “forefathers who wisely set aside a very large area for industrial properties and development” to better guarantee the city’s financial future. She said “many cities are bedroom communities without an industrial base. That’s not the case in Chino.”

Ballantyne said the city’s major revenues are derived from sales tax, property tax and development-related sources. “Retail sales activity in the city is well-diversified and spread across general consumer goods, construction, restaurants and commercial and industrial businesses,” he added.

The city hired 16 new full-time employees and re-classified nine employee positions in the 2015-16 fiscal year due to the demand for services as economic activity increased throughout the city, the city manager said. Although there is no need to increase staffing in the next fiscal year, which starts July 1, the city will do several major capital projects, Burns added.

Substantial capital projects, Burns said, include water line replacement on Central Avenue from Chino to Schaefer avenues; replacement and rehabilitation of aging water mains and lines throughout the city; traffic signal improvements at Schaefer and Ramona avenues and the signals on Grand Avenue for Spectrum East and West shopping centers; improving camera sensors for synchronized and smooth traffic flow on various streets; sewer rehabilitation on Grand, Oaks and Portsmouth avenues and improvements to Ayala Park.

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EDITORIAL: Ontario ready to soar

2016-06-22 16:52:05

L.A./Ontario International Airport took another big step toward local control Tuesday.

The U.S. House passed by voice vote a bill by Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Corona, authorizing the use of passenger facility fees at ONT to help pay off the cost of the airport's two terminals – a condition of the agreement under which Los Angeles World Airports and the city of Los Angeles will turn over control of the facility to the Ontario International Airport Authority.

The agreement calls for OIAA to pay LAWA \$50 million from passenger fees in the first five years and another \$70 million from the fees in the final five years, to reimburse LAWA, a department of L.A. city government, for investments it made at ONT.

“Since it is not possible under existing law, today we are fixing this glitch,” Rep. Calvert said.

There was no controversy in passing the bill, which is co-sponsored by area Democrats Norma Torres, Grace Napolitano, Raul Ruiz, Pete Aguilar and Mark Takano, as well as Republicans Paul Cook and Ed Royce. Still, getting legislation through the House is never a sure thing.

And this little matter nearly got caught up in something much bigger. It was part of the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization, which includes a much-contested effort to privatize air traffic control. So Rep. Calvert wisely requested that his H.R. 4369 be considered separately from the FAA reauthorization, which he noted has already been extended three times.

Once this issue is resolved by passage in the U.S. Senate, the airport transfer agreement will go back to LAWA's commissioners to ratify the funding plan. The transfer of the airport is expected to take place by October.

“The Inland Empire has [been] and continues to be one of the fastest growing regions in California and the nation, and it is far past time that we control our aviation future,” Rep. Calvert said on the House floor Tuesday.

Indeed.

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UPLAND: Veterans monument vandalized twice in about two weeks

By [BEATRIZ VALENZUELA](#)

2016-06-20 17:58:43



For the second time in about two weeks, the Upland Veterans Monument at City Hall has been vandalized, collectively causing thousands of dollars in damages, according to the monument's chairperson.

The more extensive damage was discovered Saturday when Upland police officers noticed damage to the monument, said Lt. Cliff Mathews.

"(There is) video of a 20-year-old attempting, unsuccessfully, to pry a granite slab off of the monument blocks, causing thousand of dollars in damage, ripping a brochure holder off of the kiosk and strewing it and the brochures throughout the water treatment, around the reflection walls," Ken Hargrove, monument chair, wrote in an email. An exact dollar

amount for the damage was not immediately available.

Authorities say the vandal also pulled lemons from a nearby tree and threw them at the monument, which honors all veterans who have served in the United States military.

"Were very concerned that anyone would vandalize our very beautiful monument because of what it represents," said Mathews. "We're looking to make an arrest as soon as we can."

Mathews confirmed there was a video of the vandal, but said it would not be released due to the ongoing investigation.

Saturday's attack on the new monument — which was unveiled in November — was not the first time it was vandalized.

About two weeks ago, a teen on a scooter used the base of the large obelisk to perform a trick and caused gouge marks to the structure, Mathews said.

That boy has since been identified and is cooperating with police.

The Upland Veterans' Monument committee first broke ground on the \$400,000 privately funded project last June.

The centerpiece of the Upland Veterans' Monument project is a 14-foot-tall pentagon of black granite, each side dedicated to a military branch.

Anyone with information on the identity of the most recent vandal can call Detective Aaron Wyman at 909-946-7624 ext. 3225.

7 Riverside County parks shut down as fire safety precaution



File: A sign warning of a severe fire danger placed outside a playground in the Los Angeles suburb of Porter Ranch on Jan. 22, 2016. [Mark Ralston/AFP/Getty Images](#)

Seven parks in Riverside County, which were identified as hazardous fire areas, were closed Wednesday until further notice.

This is something that Cal Fire and the Riverside County Fire Department do around this time every year as a precaution, department spokesperson April Newman told KPCC.

"Certain areas of the county have a higher risk of fire danger, and so to avoid having any injuries or fatalities to the citizens or residents and visitors of the area, we close specific areas for their safety," she said.

These are areas that have an abundance of dry brush but that don't normally receive a large amount of public traffic, Newman said.

Here are the affected recreational areas:

- Avery Canyon, along Gibbel Road, east of State Street in southeast Hemet
- Indian Canyon and North Mountain in San Jacinto
- Minto Way in Sage, north of Aguanga
- Nuevo/Lakeview, east of Menifee Road and San Jacinto Avenue
- Ramona Bowl and Bautista Canyon, southeast of Hemet

- Reinhardt Canyon, north of state Route 74 and California Avenue in Hemet
- Whitewater Canyon near Cabazon

Newman also noted that there's a burn restriction in the county that prohibits open-fire cooking without the approval of a local fire department.

See maps of the closed parks below:

LOCAL / L.A. Now

Red flag conditions ahead for Southern California amid several wildfires

By **Joseph Serna and Nina Agrawal**

JUNE 23, 2016, 7:29 AM

A

short respite from triple-digit heat allowed crews battling several wildfires in Southern California to block the flames from destroying homes this week, but dangerous red flag fire conditions have returned, the [National Weather Service](#) said Thursday.

Temperatures in the Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara county mountains and valleys were expected to hover in the 90s Thursday, but they could climb into the 100s by the weekend while coinciding with a drop in humidity and strong wind gusts, NWS meteorologist Todd Hall said.

A red flag warning — meaning weather conditions are prime for a fast-moving, destructive wildfire — was in effect for the those three counties, while a heat advisory was expected in Orange, San Diego and Riverside counties, the weather service said. It will get worse through the weekend, Hall said.

Several wildfires have broken out across Southern California since a heat wave settled over the region late last week.

The San Gabriel Complex fire, a pair of wildfires burning in the San Gabriel Mountains above Duarte, began Monday and forced hundreds of evacuations.

“When we drove away, I thought we had a 50-50 chance of seeing our house again,” said Roger Bosch, a Duarte resident.

On Wednesday, relief washed over the 73-year-old: He got to go home. Evacuations were lifted as conditions improved and firefighters increased containment of the two fires.

Of the 858 homes evacuated in the foothills areas, 534 households were allowed to return, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Capt. David Halm said. Mandatory evacuations remained in place for other parts of Duarte and Azusa, authorities said.

The fires have burned 5,235 acres and were 15% contained, officials said Thursday.

The battle against the flames was aided by cooler temperatures and higher humidity in the days following Monday's record-breaking heat, authorities said. Steep, challenging terrain presented a problem, said Mike Wakowski, the commander for the multiagency wildfire effort.

“We're trying to secure as much as possible before the next heat wave comes,” [Los Angeles County Fire Department](#) Deputy Chief Vince Peña said Wednesday.

Conditions improved enough this week in Santa Barbara County that crews began leaving the Sherpa fire burning in the Santa Ynez Mountains and Los Padres National Forest. That fire has burned 7,486 acres and was 93% contained, the U.S. Forest Service said.

Three hot shot crews dropped onto the mountain earlier this week to help build defenses at the fire's most isolated points deep in the forest, the Forest Service said.

In San Diego County, firefighters have increased containment of the Border fire just north of the U.S.-Mexico border that prompted mandatory evacuations for the entire east county community of Potrero. The Border fire was about 20% contained and has burned 6,840 acres, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The Border fire has destroyed four outbuildings and left three firefighters with minor injuries. The cause is under investigation.

Times staff writer Hailey Branson-Potts contributed to this report.

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ALSO

[New evidence in teen's death may set the man convicted of killing her free](#)

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

How San Bernardino County firefighters are preparing for the next Dec. 2

By John M. Blodgett, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Wednesday, June 22, 2016



FONTANA >> The prospect of donning ballistic helmets and vests, like a SWAT team, was unsettling for many San Bernardino County firefighters.

Then [Dec. 2 happened](#).

“For us to put on protective gear was a difficult thing to wrap our heads around,” said firefighter and spokesperson Jeremy Kern. But the San Bernardino shooting “really brought it home for our personnel.”

“We’re talking minutes and seconds here,” Kern said. “The sooner we get firefighter/paramedics in to stop bleeding, to triage and to extract

victims, the better chance we have of survivability.”

Getting firefighters to victims sooner rather than later takes more than putting them in body armor. It requires police protection and unprecedented coordination between the two agencies. So beginning earlier this year, county fire began a series of coordinated law enforcement and firefighting training in the communities it serves.

For 10 days beginning June 13, San Bernardino County Fire Department and Fontana Police Department, assisted by San Bernardino County sheriff’s personnel, have trained at Fontana’s Water of Life Community Church to respond together to escalated threat situations such as a shooting. Friday will conclude the exercise.

On Wednesday, the training was opened to the media. Outside, incident command centers were set up in the parking lot. Inside, 28 volunteers played the victims, from those with no injuries to those who perished.

Sara Morning, a nurse educator and EMS technician with county fire, applied simulated wounds as a makeup artist. She made it appear that a bullet had grazed the neck of Kalia Flores, 13, of Beaumont, who also was told to act as though she had a hurt knee. Another volunteer was instructed to stay near a \$98,000 mannequin that simulated a victim with an amputated leg and other injuries.

During each round of training, waves of officers fanned through the building at 7625 East Ave. in search of a gunman who preceded them, firing blanks from an M-16. After the gunman moved to the second floor, diamond formations of armored firefighters, surrounded by armed officers, followed and started triaging the first-floor wounded under police protection.

They moved upstairs only after that floor was deemed safe enough for them to proceed.

In between rounds, police and firefighters gathered in a large circle to discuss what worked well and what needed improvement.

Former practices kept firefighters away from “hot” scenes for their own protection, delaying possible life-saving efforts, Kern said.

County fire began looking into acquiring ballistics gear in March 2014, Kern said. The move was prompted by news of firefighters in other areas being attacked or threatened while performing their duties.

It took the department almost two years to acquire the funding — a \$415,000 Homeland Security grant — and to assemble a program and policies. The money went toward the training and the purchase of 400 vests and helmets, each set assigned to a firefighter.

In Fontana, even though the county provides fire protection to the city, the city raised its own money to purchase 30 sets of protective gear.

County fire will continue to roll out the training in communities it serves, Kern said. It's already done so in Hesperia and Victorville, for example, and Yucca Valley and Needles are slated for coming months.

Fontana Mayor Acquanetta Warren attended Wednesday's training to interview organizers for a community television show and to witness firsthand her city's police and fire departments learning to better work together.

"Doing this kind of exercise makes sure we stay on our mission (as a city) to keep people safe," she said. In the long run, she added, the training will benefit not only Fontana but the region, with Fontana serving as a "guiding light."

"It can happen at any time," Warren said.

URL: <http://www.dailybulletin.com/general-news/20160622/how-san-bernardino-county-firefighters-are-preparing-for-the-next-dec-2>

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Orlando, San Bernardino reflect changing face of terror risk, nuances in coverage



A proliferation in “lone wolf”-style terrorist attacks like the Orlando, Florida nightclub shooting earlier this month has more businesses than ever before turning to insurance professionals for protection. Both carriers and agents have been fielding a rising number of requests, and the low chance that a lone-wolf attack will be detected has security firms looking more closely at solutions.

The changing face of terrorism risk, however, means agents and brokers have several choices of coverage to put before commercial clients.

In Orlando, 29-year-old Omar Mateen killed 49 people and wounded 53 others in a shooting at Pulse, a gay nightclub, before he was killed by police. During the attack, Mateen called 911 and pledged allegiance to the Islamic State terrorist group. He had also spoken against homosexuality previously, Mateen’s relatives said.

Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malike, the perpetrators in the 2015 San Bernardino attack, were likewise unsupported by any larger group, but did express commitment to jihadism and martyrdom before going on a shooting spree and attempted bombing in a San Bernardino County Department of Public Health training event and Christmas party.

Both events involved a lone, or small number, of perpetrators acting on an ideological basis without the backing of a particular group, terrorist cell, or network.

The events have fueled an increased interest in standalone terrorism coverage, particularly among small businesses, said Jen Rubin, head of Hiscox War, Terrorism & Political Violence Practice Group.

“We’ve gotten a lot of inquiries since Orlando, with folks wanting to know what’s available in the market, what pricing looks like and what limits look like,” Rubin said. “Most of that is coming from the smaller side of the market – those who are largely new to standalone coverage and may not be big enough to have their own security procedures in place.”

Unlike government-backed terrorism insurance, which includes a \$120 million loss threshold, standalone coverage pays at the first dollar lost and operates on a much broader definition of insurance. Standard industry policies define terrorism as an attack that is politically, religiously or ideologically motivated – a determination that is made after claims departments review details of the case, news media reports and other evidence.

Something like the Orlando shooting likely qualify under this definition, Rubin said.

Standalone terrorism coverage pays for property loss, including repair and replacement, as well as business income and any relocation expenses needed. Businesses can also purchase endorsements for nuclear, radiological, chemical or biological attacks, which are typically not covered under the policy.

But the San Bernardino and Orlando incidents had something else in common – they were both committed using firearms.

Gun violence in the United States has become so prevalent that several insurance companies, including major brands like Willis, have begun offering “active shooter” insurance. The policies provide coverage outside of workers’ compensation policies, including the liability companies have if they are found not to have taken needed precautions to prevent gun rampages.

It also covers “on the scene” costs of an attack, including property damage and any needed counseling or consulting for victims.

Wendy Peters, an executive vice president at Willis, said that like terrorism insurance, “there’s been widespread interest in the product.”

So which coverage choice is preferable – if either?

Rubin says it is up to an agent to determine, based on the particularities of the client.

“When you’re doing your review of coverages, it’s really important to make sure perils are defined and any gray areas you’re concerned about are documented or discussed,” she said. “A traditional policy is silent on what would happen in an active shooter event; new products are defining what is covered based on the evolution of events in the market.”

Related Stories:

[San Bernardino, other mass shootings prompt “active shooter” coverage](#)

[Orlando mass shooting sparks interest in terrorism insurance](#)



Mass Shooting at Cinema in Germany Leaves 25 Wounded



Heavily-armed police stand outside a movie theater where an armed man has reportedly opened fire on June 23, 2016 in Viernheim, Germany. According to initial media reports, the man entered the cinema today at approximately 3pm local time, fired a shot in the air and barricaded himself inside. (Credit: Alexander Scheuber/Getty Images)

A mass shooting at a cinema in Viernheim, Germany, has left at least 25 people injured, German public TV reported Thursday.

Viernheim is in western Germany, near Frankfurt.

The shooter entered the cinema, apparently heavily armed, around 3 p.m. local time, authorities said.

“We don’t know who the shooter is or what kind of weapons he has, but the possibility this could be a terror attack is crossing the minds of people here in Germany,” CNN’s Atika Shubert reported from Berlin.

It’s not clear how many of the injured were shot, and how many may have been hurt in other ways.

The cinema is part of a major shopping center, home to more than 100 businesses. The complex hosts 20,000 visitors daily, according to its website.

Mass shootings are rare in Germany. But in 2002, a gunman opened fire at a high school in Erfurt, killing 16 people — 13 staff members, two students and a police officer. In 2009, a gunman dressed in military gear killed 15 people in a spree that started at a school and spanned two small towns near Stuttgart.

Check back for updates on this developing story.

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Sheriff's union defends police 'militarization' after Orlando shooting

Shootings: Stop 'bleeding-heart nonsense' about heavy armor, deputies union leader says

By Susan Abram, Los Angeles Daily News

Wednesday, June 22, 2016



The Kevlar helmet that saved an Orlando SWAT officer from a gunshot wound during the nightclub massacre this month is proof of why police need sophisticated equipment, say local unions representing law enforcement agencies.

The issue was raised Wednesday after George Hofstetter, president of the [Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs](#) released a statement saying the mass shooting inside the Pulse nightclub could have been worse if police hadn't been equipped with powerful weapons and tactical gear, including throat, groin, chest and shoulder protection — military equipment that critics say should not be used by local law enforcement

However, Hofstetter said such equipment put officers on even footing with Omar Mateen, the shooter who gunned down 49 people on June 12 just after 2 a.m. The gunman, who proclaimed his allegiance to ISIS, used a powerful Sig Sauer MCX semi-automatic rifle and a Glock 17.

“It should also put to rest the bleeding-heart nonsense that it ‘looks bad’ to have officers suited up in body armor and riot gear and deployed in armored vehicles,” Hofstetter said of the criticism in recent years of [police using military equipment](#).

Since 2014, when television cameras showed heavily armored officers responding to riots and protests in Ferguson, Missouri, over the police shooting of unarmed African-American teenager Michael Brown, law enforcement there and in other cities came under fire for making communities appear like war zones. Police were vilified and the term “militarization” of American police surfaced.

That criticism led to scrutiny of a program operated by the Department of Defense, which has provided municipal police, county sheriffs and school districts with surplus military equipment for 30 years via its [“1033 program.”](#)

Under the program, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, for example, received nearly 800 M16 rifles in 2013. Protective clothing, electrical equipment and other tools also were obtained.

In response, President Obama signed Executive Order 13688, which regulates what police agencies receive. As a result, some departments are being forced to return their armored vehicles, for example, to the federal government.

“To me it's one of the stupidest things we have heard,” said Steve James, [president of the Long Beach Police Officers Association](#). “We are fighting a war. The war on terrorism is here in our country. The problem is the other side doesn't wear a uniform. Having this equipment is just good policy.”

James said the San Bernardino shooters, who killed 14 people on Dec. 2, 2015, carried powerful assault

weapons and improvised explosive devices.

“What are we supposed to do in that situation?” James asked rhetorically. “Are we supposed to go in Ford Crown Victorias with a handgun?”

The American Civil Liberties Union has said that mass shootings are used by law enforcement to justify the acquisition of military equipment.

Once the department acquires military technology, there’s an urge to use it, said Peter Bibring, director of police practices and senior staff attorney at the [ACLU of Southern California](#).

“The other thing is, the 1033 program, which was used to acquire this was terribly unregulated,” Bibring said. “One of the problems was departments were getting far more gear than could possibly be justified.”

The ACLU published [a report about it](#) just before Ferguson, Bibring said.

Even school districts received assault rifles and tanks, he added.

Bibring said SWAT was originally created for such situations as active shooters, barricaded suspects and hostage situations.

But James of the Long Beach Police Officers Association and others emphasized that police on patrol can’t always wait for SWAT. And the notion of officers showing up in riot gear in every situation is unfair, he added.

“If we get a dispatch for a loud music call and we show up in an armored tank with a bunch of rifles, yeah, that’s a problem,” James said. “Do we actually need tanks that shoot mortars? That’s probably not necessary. But do we need vehicles that can stop a .223 round? You better believe we do.”

But all the equipment and training means nothing if there aren’t enough police officers, noted Craig Lally, president of the [Los Angeles Police Protective League](#).

“The Los Angeles Police Department is a well-equipped and well-trained police force,” Lally said in a statement. “However, all the equipment and training in the world cannot help if we do not have enough officers to mount an effective response.”

Lally called the LAPD’s daily patrol staffing levels “abysmal” and said the department can’t both respond to a mass shooting incident while also safely patrolling the rest of the city.

“This shortcoming must be addressed immediately before tragedies like San Bernardino or Orlando come to our city,” he added.

Jorja Leap, an adjunct associate professor of Social Welfare at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, agreed with the LAPD union president that adequate staffing is important.

“It is more a matter of tactics and strategy than it is equipment,” Leap said. “I think it’s about staffing, it’s about training, and it’s about having enough boots on the ground.”

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20160622/sheriffs-union-defends-police-militarization-after-orlando-shooting>

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Local Dems join House sit-in to force vote on gun control legislation

By staff and wire reports

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

WASHINGTON >> House Republican leaders began trying to break up a sit-in on the House floor, hours after Democrats pledged Wednesday to continue until Republicans agree to hold votes on two gun-related measures. Exasperated Republicans were forced to recess while cutting off cameras that showed the protest.

Nearly 100 Democrats led by Georgia Rep. John Lewis demanded a vote on measures to expand background checks and block gun purchases by some terrorism suspects in the aftermath of [this month's massacre in Orlando, Florida](#), that killed 49 people in a gay nightclub. It was the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

"No bill, no break," shouted Democrats, who demanded that Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin, keep the House in session through its planned weeklong recess next week to debate and vote on gun legislation.

"This is nothing more than a publicity stunt," Ryan said on CNN on Wednesday evening. "This is not a way to try to bring up legislation."

Democrats accused Republicans of political cowardice by failing to schedule a vote.

"Are they more afraid than the children at Sandy Hook?" asked Rep. Mike Thompson, D-California, referring to the 2012 shooting that killed 26 people, including 20 elementary school children, in Newtown, Connecticut. "What is so scary about having a vote?"

Lewis, a veteran civil rights leader revered by Democrats, said action on gun violence is long overdue.

"We have lost hundreds and thousands of innocent people to gun violence," Lewis said as he urged fellow Democrats to stand with him in the area near the podium, known as the well.

About 30 minutes after the sit-in began, Rep. Ted Poe, R-Texas, tried to start the House's work at noon. The customary prayer and pledge of allegiance went ahead, but Poe was forced to recess the House when dozens of Democrats refused to leave the well.

All four Democrats from the Inland congressional delegation joined the sit-in, including Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-Redlands.

"Joining @repjohnlewis & @HouseDemocrats to demand a vote to end #gunviolence. #NoBillNoBreak #SitIn," tweeted Aguilar, whose district was the site of the Dec. 2 terror attack in San Bernardino.

Rep. Mark Takano, D-Riverside, participated.

"The goal of the sit-in is to prevent the House majority from treating mass shootings as business as usual," Takano spokesman Josh Weisz said. "Congress has a responsibility to act."

In an emailed statement, Rep. Norma Torres, D-Riverside, said: "The gun violence epidemic is a complicated issue, and there aren't easy answers, but doing nothing is not an option. ... I am determined to do what I can so

that we don't let one more mass shooting go by without taking action."

Rep. Raul Ruiz, D-Palm Desert, also joined the sit-in. In a telephone interview, Ruiz recalled instances as an emergency-room physician in which he had to save the lives of gunshot victims.

"I have performed procedures that required me to massage the heart to keep them alive, put a finger in a bullet hole to stop the bleeding, put in chest tubes to drain blood from lungs (and) perform CPR to keep them alive," he said. "I saved some and I lost some ... but they all suffered."

Ruiz added that while there is no cure-all for gun violence, "These are common-sense measures that Democrats, Republicans, NRA members (and) the vast majority of Americans agree with."

"We are demanding a vote so that terrorists are not able to buy a gun in America. We are demanding action to keep Americans safe."

Republican leaders, in an effort to regain control of the House floor, planned an evening vote on a measure to override President Barack Obama's veto of a law that would block the administration's recently issued fiduciary law, several House lawmakers said Wednesday evening.

The vote appears to be an attempt to force Democrats to participate in regular House business, because if Democrats abstained, Republicans could get the necessary two-thirds majority of those present and voting to send the override measure to the Senate.

"I suspect that we'll have that vote. It'll probably be loud, and it'll probably be noisy," said Rep. Charlie Dent, a Pennsylvania Republican. "I can't predict what will happen. All I say is you might want to get in the gallery and watch the show."

Although the cameras were turned off, lawmakers, including Takano, relied on social media to transmit photos and video of their protest, using Facebook, Twitter and Periscope. C-SPAN used Periscope video from Rep. Scott Peters, D-California, to provide coverage of the protest.

Rep. John Larson, D-Connecticut, said lawmakers were "calling for the simple dignity of a vote." Joining the protest were several Democratic senators, including Massachusetts' Elizabeth Warren and Connecticut's Chris Murphy, who had waged a nearly 15-hour filibuster last week to force votes in the Senate on gun legislation. Those votes failed Monday night.

Ryan said Wednesday that House leaders were "waiting to see what the Senate does before proceeding" on gun legislation, including a possible compromise that Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, is seeking.

Larson and other Democrats cited polls showing broad public support for expanding background checks for firearms purchases and blocking terrorism suspects from buying guns.

"Rise up Democrats, rise up Americans," Larson said. "We will occupy this chamber."

Among those protesting on the House floor was Rep. Tammy Duckworth, D-Illinois, an Iraq war veteran who lost both her legs in combat. She got out of a wheelchair and sat on the House floor with other lawmakers.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-California., said the House needs to act on gun legislation, rather than continually hold moments of silence in memory of victims of gun violence.

"We truly believe that if there were a vote that we would win the vote, because 85 to 90 percent of the American people ... support responsible background checks legislation, which is bipartisan, and the 'no-fly, no-buy' legislation, which is bipartisan," Pelosi said.

White House press secretary Josh Earnest said House Democrats were "showing the kind of frustration and even anger that people around the country have about the inability of the Republican-led Congress to take common-

sense steps that would protect the American people.”

C-SPAN, a cable network that provides continual coverage of House and Senate floor proceedings, does not control the cameras. They’re run on authorization by legislative leaders.

“They can turn off all the TV they want, but they can’t stop us from doing what we know is the right thing here in this well,” Larson said of GOP leaders.

“I am willing to stay here until hell freezes over,” added Rep. Maxine Waters, D-California.

As the protest continued, lawmakers briefly sang “We Shall Not Be Moved.”

Staff writer Jeff Horseman contributed to this report.

URL: <http://www.dailybulletin.com/social-affairs/20160622/local-dems-join-house-sit-in-to-force-vote-on-gun-control-legislation>

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